

Broken thumb sidelines center

By Tom Copain
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Chris Pronchik sat in the bleachers next to the tunnel at the Greenberg Ice Pavilion Tuesday with his arm tucked inside his Penn State jacket.

ICERS

Normally, the Penn State Icers center would be practicing with the rest of his teammates as his team prepares to play Ohio this weekend. But he'll be a spectator for the foreseeable future after he broke his right thumb last week during practice.



Pronchik

"It was a fluke," Pronchik said. "I broke it, and I went to the doctor."

"So I got a couple of pins in it, gonna be out a couple of weeks."

Pronchik was injured when he was skating near the net during practice last week and was hit in the hand with a puck, Penn State coach Scott Balboni said. Pronchik could miss the remaining regular season games, Balboni said.

The junior forward said he had surgery Friday to put the pins in his hand and had his thumb — as well as a good portion of his lower arm — wrapped Tuesday at practice.

The pins will be in for three to four weeks as a starter, he said, and his return depends on getting the motion in his hand.

Balboni said Saturday Pronchik would be out at least until nationals but gave a more detailed description after practice Tuesday.

"He's at least four weeks out

before he gets his screws out and he can skate again," Balboni said. "From there it's just a matter of seeing where we stand. But he's six to eight weeks, which we have eight weeks left in the season. So I think he's shooting to be ready for, at best, the last weekend of the year."

Pronchik's injury is just another blow to a team that recently got forward and senior captain Matt Kirstein back from a medial collateral ligament (MCL) sprain.

The Icers are also without forward Taylor Cera, who is still recovering from a high ankle sprain.

But in Pronchik, the Icers lose a lot of team speed down the middle and the center's 13 points — seven goals and six assists — in his 20 games.

They're also losing one of their better defensive and faceoff pivots and one of their main penalty killers.

"It's a crucial loss for us," forward Tim O'Brien said. "It's tough to lose a guy, especially when it's in practice getting hurt. That's a bummer for Chris."

"He's been working hard all season and been in the lineup for the past I don't know how many games."

Now Pronchik, who was nagged by a groin injury for good portions of last season, can only watch as the Icers begin one of their toughest stretches of the year this weekend.

"It's really bad timing," Pronchik said.

"But at least I can still get on a bike. I was over at the gym for practice most days now and then try and keep in shape so that when I get back I'm kind of right back in it."

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Samantha M. Shal/Collegian

John Conte (6) controls the puck along the boards during the Icers' 10-3 win against Niagara on Dec. 11.

Penn State playing sloppy in wins

By Tom Kinslow
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Until the end of the second period, Saturday afternoon's game was a nightmare for the Penn State Icers.

Passes missed their mark, timing was a hair off and the rotations on the penalty kill just weren't there.

Though the team had won 15 of its last 16 games, these were all symptoms of a team that was not in sync coming off a nearly month-long break.

That inactivity showed this past weekend for the Penn State Icers, who struggled in an exhibition win against Robert Morris and a 5-3 victory against Washington & Jefferson.

While disappointing, Balboni knows it's something a team goes through after such a prolonged layoff.

"Obviously we weren't on the ice, and even if guys skated and stayed in shape, they weren't in game-type situation shape," Balboni said. "It does take a weekend to knock off the rust, and luckily we were able to get a win and the exhibition win even though we didn't play that well."

Another problem the Icers pointed out was playing down to their competition.

Forward Tim O'Brien said he didn't see the same effort and determination from the squad that he did prior to the break, a problem he said they had earlier in the season, leading to a shootout loss against West Chester in October.

With Penn State being able to walk away with victories this time around, O'Brien believes it has taught the team some lessons.

"If you play down to other opponents, we can be beaten by anybody," O'Brien said. "But if we play

our game and everybody comes mentally prepared and with the talent that we have, we can play with any team in the country. But at the same time, when we come around, fooling around in warmups and not being mentally focused, we can play down to anybody and lose to anybody in the league."

Another contributing factor to the Icers' struggles this past weekend was a change in routine.

With no class, the days were longer for Penn State. Practices were held in the morning as opposed to the afternoon. During the rest of the day, the Icers tried to take part in some team activities, such as going out for meals.

All of that downtime took Penn State out of its routine, but with the start of another semester, it's back to normalcy for the Icers.

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Jones

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career. Chadwin coached Jones at Abington Friends High School when the big man started playing organized basketball in his sophomore year. He helped mold him into a Division I talent.

Cornley's hard work and relentless energy level on the basketball court has influenced Jones, and they have been something Jones has acknowledged on multiple occasions and has attributed to

his development as a forward.

Both care about Jones and both know he is not performing up to the level they've seen him play at over the past few years.

"I think it has everything to do with his mentality right now," Cornley said. "He's always been able to give great effort. Right now, he's probably in a state where he's mentally exhausted and frustrated."

"It's more for him to find ways to find out who he is as a person, and what he needs to do to stay motivated in order to bring the

things to the table that the team needs him to do."

Jones asked his former teammate what he used to do when he went through a streak of bad games. Cornley told Jones he would watch film of himself in games, analyzing where he was on the court and what spots he needed to be in.

But perhaps more importantly, Cornley said he used to walk around campus or watch movies to get his mind off basketball. His greatest source of medicine, he said, would be to remove himself

from the game all together and collect his thoughts.

Chadwin believes Jones might be getting frustrated when he doesn't get touches on the offensive end.

"That's what any player feels sometimes," Chadwin said. "You have to get some good possessions where you get your energy up to feel good about yourself."

This season, Jones is averaging the same amount of points he did last season — 6.2.

But he is averaging a full rebound less this season (5.0)

without Cornley in the frontcourt.

His offensive production and rebounding totals are usually parallel. Jones leads the team with 28 offensive rebounds this year, but last year, he ended up grabbing 81 of them.

"It'll work out for him in the long run," Chadwin said. "When teams lose a couple close games, coaches tend to make changes and adjustments. It's not like he's not playing. His role is just a little different."

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Iowa

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behind the screen and shoot the three. If you run at them, they can drive by you. They are very unselfish, so they drive and kick out to open shooters very well. They're just a very smart, offensive team."

The Lions can relate to Iowa's up-tempo style of play, as Washington said her team is more comfortable playing in transition.

But in order to get out and run, Penn State will need to create turnovers.

"It's huge," senior guard Tyra Grant said of her team's need to create opportunities for itself. "When we're able to get a steal or a deflection or something like that, we've got to capitalize on that with two points, three points, or getting to the free throw line."

"Just making it a positive is a good thing to do."

However, creating turnovers hasn't happened that often for the Lions. Penn State has struggled to capitalize on its opponents' miscues as it currently ranks 10th in the Big Ten in

turnover margin, one spot behind Iowa.

Even though both teams are near the top of the conference in protecting the ball — each averages just more than 17 giveaways per game — the Lions need to try and create opportunities for their defense by forcing the Hawkeyes to take the ball inside.

Washington wants Iowa to have to shoot over her 6-foot-4 center, Nikki Greene, because she realizes the Hawkeyes can close in on a large lead with their lethal 3-point shooting.

Iowa leads the conference with 122 3-pointers made, and in order for Grant and her teammates to get the memory of Wahlin coming off the high screen and burying shot after shot out of their minds, the senior needs to build off the momentum her team established during the previous contest.

"It gives you a lot of confidence," Grant said. "But you have to realize that Iowa's a great team. ... We just need to execute our defense, get the steals, get the rebounds and score in transition."

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can earn a spot, there's not a whole lot of motivation for them."

The head coach sees Crowell's potential, something that comes from the Pittsburgh transfer's wrestling abilities and wrestling knowledge.

Crowell's father, Dave Crowell, coaches at Nazareth Area High School.

Cael Sanderson said he considers the elder Crowell to be a pre-

mier coach on a national scale.

The foundation for Crowell to earn the 197-pound spot is there, and Cael Sanderson will get a better grip on his potential at Millersville, where Crowell said he will compete this upcoming weekend.

"Spots are always open to a point," Cael Sanderson said. "Crowell is a guy that needs to get some matches in at 197 and just get a feel for that weight class."

Crowell said he moved up a weight class for the team and feels

"Spots are always open to a point."

Cael Sanderson
wrestling head coach

that, for now, he is too light to compete at heavyweight.

"Right now it's up to the coaching staff," Crowell said.

"I'm going to wrestle at 197. If I compete well, maybe they'll put me in."

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Womack

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Quinn has torn the ACL in each of her knees during her Penn State career and, although she is not playing this year, is still around to help the team in her senior season.

"I'm sure she's gonna talk to her about the rehab and the emotional part that comes with having those kind of knee injuries," Washington said.

But of chief importance for the Lions right now is finding a player or players to make up for what

"I'm gonna have to get one more stop than maybe I'm used to."

Tyra Grant
senior guard

Womack brings to the table.

Washington specifically mentioned forward Marisa Wolfe has come on as of late and could be one of those players who make up for Womack's absence. She also mentioned freshman guard Gizelle Studevent and sophomore

guard Zhaque Gray. The coach said she would like to see Studevent and Gray pick up the intensity on the defensive end.

Grant added it's going to take a total team effort for the Lions to move forward without Womack and continue the success they've had.

"It's just not gonna be one person," Grant said. "We're not gonna say, 'Gizelle, you have to go be Renee now.' It's gonna have to be everybody. I'm gonna have to get one more stop than maybe I'm used to."

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Please send your resume to Archie@psu.edu

Penn State Equestrian Team

All levels of experience are welcome and wanted, just bring your skills and love of riding and join us on these dates for more information.

Mandatory Pre-tryout Meeting:
Thursday, January 14th
in 118 ASI Building
7:00 pm

Try-outs: Sunday, January 17th
at Eastwood Farms
Time TBA

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For more information or questions visit our website at:
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